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## **We don't get it**

Mike Griffin, guest columnist

Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, said that "in contemplating the political institutions of the United States, I lament, that we waste so much time and money in punishing crime and take so little pains to prevent them." (1806)

Nothing I've heard lately echoes this sentiment more than a recent telephone survey conducted by the Scripps Survey Research Center at Ohio University. The survey asked people to rate 13 issues, ranging from divorce to America's post-war occupation of Iraq. In their rating they were to check one of four responses to indicate how important they considered the issue to be from a moral standpoint.

The survey was conducted from Jan. 30-Feb. 10 in the wake of the moral values concern cited by voters in the November 2004 presidential election.

The highest rated issue of moral importance to the 1001 people surveyed was child abuse at a whopping 89 percent. In other words, when asked whether the participants believed that child abuse was very important, somewhat important, not important or don't know, 89 percent said child abuse was "a very important" moral issue facing America!

I must say that, personally, I don't find that hard to believe. But what I do find disturbing is that out of the same group of people, only 18 percent found that gambling was a very important issue. Only 38 percent saw same-sex marriage as very important. Only 45 percent saw pornography as very important. And lastly, only 51 percent saw abortion (which to some is the ultimate in child abuse) as a very important moral issue.

Benjamin Rush's words ring in my ears as I think about how much time and money is spent in managing social problems while so little is being done to prevent them. As a child, I was repeatedly told that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." There seem to be very few people today, however, who are seeing the connection between the loss of a common moral code and the social problems that are inflicting abuse on the most fragile segment of our society - our children.

All of the social problems that are being brought to bear upon innocent children are not those that they bring upon themselves, but rather those that we as adults have allowed to fall upon them. It is adults who operate the gambling and pornography industry. It is adults who are experimenting with alternate lifestyles and the attempt to redefine marriage. It is adults who are demanding the choice of a woman to terminate her pregnancy.

And yet, we don't seem to want to see the effects that these decisions and lifestyles have on our children. For example, it is a known fact that pornography plays a leading role in encouraging sexual molestation. Ted Bundy, convicted murderer and sex offender, acknowledged this in an interview with Dr. James Dobson prior to his execution in January 1989. Ted Bundy said, "Š the FBI's own study on serial homicide shows that the most common interest among serial killers is pornography. Š there are lots of other kids playing in streets around this country today who are going to be dead tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day and month, because other young people are reading the kinds of things and seeing the kinds of things that are available in the media today."

If this was true 16 years ago then how much more is it now?

On Jan. 20, Judge Gary Lancaster of the U.S. District Court for Western Pennsylvania dismissed a federal case against hardcore pornographers who were distributing obscene sex videos. His actions declared federal obscenity laws to be unconstitutional. The judge then went on to defend his decision by saying: "After [the 2003 Lawrence v. Texas decision], however, upholding the public sense of morality is not even a legitimate state interest that can justify infringing one's liberty interest to engage in consensual sexual conduct in private" [emphasis added].

Judge Lancaster is an example of how "we just don't get it!" He doesn't get the correlation between eroding moral standards and the social problems we are facing as a result.

It looks to me like our children need protection in the midst of our [adults'] lack of concern over moral issues that are being allowed to inflict abuse upon them. Our quest as a country to free itself from moral absolutes has harmed our most precious treasure - our children.

And worst of all, "we still don't get it!"

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